

New GS-2210 Information Technology Standard

Background

The GS-2210 classification standard (referred to by OPM as JFS or job family standard) was issued by the Office of Personnel Management on May 31, 2001, and became effective as a final standard on that date. On June 7, 2001, it was transmitted to all federal agencies with guidance on how it should be applied. The standard was developed, vetted with the agencies, issued in a draft format and tested before being put into effect. The IT Workforce Committee of the Federal CIO Council did this testing and refinement with an unprecedented level of involvement. New federal IT jobs will be classified using this standard and all existing IT jobs need to be converted to the standard.

Coverage

The new standard covers 100% of those in the GS /GM -334 (Computer Specialist) standard and replaces that standard in its entirety. It also covers employees currently classified under other standards if their jobs are primarily related to the use and management of information technology. Some employees in the telecommunications standard (GS-391) may be more appropriately covered under the Network Services specialty of the GS-2210 standard. Also, many IT managers and policy development officials covered by general management standards (e.g., GS-301, GS-340, GS-343, etc.) will find that their jobs are now more explicitly defined by the Policy and Planning specialty in the new standard.

The standard covers IT professionals in Grades 05 -15. It does not cover senior executive (SES) positions above this grade range or computer assistant or technician jobs below this grade range. These latter positions will also be revised by OPM and will be included in the GS-2200 job family.

Motivation for Change

In creating the GS-2210 classification standard, OPM was, in part, responding to concerns raised by the Federal CIO Council in its 1999 IT Workforce Challenge Report. This is the first major change to the IT job classification standard in ten years. The old standard did not contain descriptions for growing occupations such as webmasters and web-development. The Federal CIO Council IT Workforce Committee found that because of the absence of guidance in the GS-334 series, web-related jobs were being classified in a broad range of occupational categories, including public affairs specialist, forms designer and others.

Redefining IT Careers

The government's historical practice of lumping all IT workers into a single job series did not recognize the government's need to compete in an increasingly competitive IT marketplace where job specialties and knowledge are more key to compensation and performance than are levels of responsibility and scope of job performance. By breaking the job series into ten subordinate specialties, the government better target recruitment and retention packages to these critical job specialties. It should also allow the government to get a much better understanding of turnover and quit rates within the

occupation so that problems and opportunities can be identified and addressed on a reasonable basis.

Maintaining Standard Currency

As noted, it has been ten years since this standard was revised. The new standard was built in as streamlined a fashion as possible. Most of the standard consists of "illustrations" of specific skills that employees in the job specialties will be demonstrating. The illustrations can be changed on a frequent basis (OPM intends to review them annually) as IT technologies, skills and job definitions change.

Impact on Salary

The new standard should have limited impact on salary. As part of the review process, agencies were asked to comment on the potential salary impact and need to reclassify jobs. Most responded that this impact would be low. Reclassifications of jobs from other job families into the GS-2210 standard are somewhat more likely. Salary changed for many in the Computer Specialist (GS-334) occupation in January 2001 when new special pay rates went into effect for employees in the GS 5-12 pay grades. These special pay rates will apply to the new GS-2210 series. Anyone in these grades who is reclassified into the new series will be covered by the special rates.

Potential for Career Growth

The Computer Specialist classification standard was based primarily on roles, relationships and hierarchies, rather than on expertise and competency. Thus, in order to promote extremely talented technicians into more senior ranks, it was often necessary to give them management responsibilities for which they were ill equipped and ill suited. The GS-2210 series now contains standards and guidelines that allow for non-supervisors to be classified up to grade GS-15. This should make the federal government more competitive when recruiting for higher-level technical talent.

Recruitment

Because of the complexity of the old standards, job descriptions borrowed heavily from their language. The new illustrations should provide a basis for simplifying job descriptions and job announcements so that they can actually describe what prospective employees will do when they are hired. This should improve the government's ability to advertise for technical talent.

Next Steps

In addition to this effort, the CIO Council IT Workforce Committee is working on a concurrent effort with the National Academy of Public Administration. This NAPA effort is examining the potential for broader scale reform. NAPA will be releasing its final report at the IRMCO Conference in Hershey, PA, on September 5, 2001.